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CATALOGUE

OF AN

EXHIBITION

OF

PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND PRINTS

BY

HOKUSAI

BELONGING TO THE ESTATE OF
FRANCIS LATHROP

NEW YORK
BERLIN PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPANY
305 MADISON AVENUE

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
HAMILTON EASTER FIELD

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FOREWORD

In the *Burlington Magazine* for July, 1908, I described in some detail the collection of Japanese pictorial art formed by the late Francis Lathrop, with particular reference to the work of Kiyonaga. I shall now speak, not so much of the collection as a whole, but rather of the paintings and prints by Hokusai now being shown, which formed the most important element. Roughly speaking, the paintings and drawings by Hokusai numbered about sixty-five, the prints about four thousand, and the books not far from two hundred and fifty. Hokusai's books will not be shown now for the difficulties of properly exhibiting them are too great. Moreover, I am sure that it would not have been Mr. Lathrop's wish that what is probably the most complete set of these albums ever formed should be dispersed.

Unlike our Western art, the development of which has been traced in all its ramifications, the Japanese have never had a serious history of their art, but only slight anecdotes of the principal painters, seemingly unconnected with the story of their civilization. Now, in order to reconstruct the story of their past, it is necessary first to gather the materials, and this was Mr. Lathrop's pre-occupation during the last fifteen years of his life. His aim was to choose such prints and paintings

as would present the continuous evolution from the early masters down to Hokusai and Hiroshige. On account of the extreme rarity of the earliest men, any such collection must necessarily be fragmentary, until one comes to the school of "Ukiyoye" ("Mirror of the Passing World"), which represents the daily life of the people. From the time of Matahei there were relatively few movements which could not be studied in detail in Mr. Lathrop's studio. All the energy which Lathrop spent on this subject was given in the hope that he might add to the birthright of every citizen of our metropolis. This self-sacrifice and devotion were but little appreciated during his life-time for, I believe, I was the only person to whom he spoke freely of his aims, and my own lips were sealed. When writing for the *Burlington*, I knew that his health and fortune were impaired, but I did not realize how serious it all was and hoped that he would still be able to leave his collections to the Metropolitan Museum without injustice to his heirs. But, after the panic of 1907, he considered it his duty toward these heirs to attach conditions to his bequest to the Museum, which, unfortunately, it was felt could not be legally fulfilled. This decision involved the dispersion of a large portion of the collection. It, however, leaves his entire estate so that the proceeds will form a trust fund, the income of which is finally to be used by the Metropolitan Museum for the acquisition of works by American artists. All purchasers, therefore, are contributing to the Museum fund. Following what I knew would have

been his wishes, I, as executor, have sold to the Metropolitan about a hundred and sixty prints, among which are some especially beautiful "primitives." Others I have sold to American collectors. The Hokusais remain fairly intact. Some of the finest prints are gone, but the paintings and drawings, save a few unimportant ones sold to a Montreal collector, are virtually all here. It has seemed in keeping with what I knew Mr. Lathrop would have wished to give this exhibition, including all the important Hokusais, for it is an unrivalled sequence of paintings and prints. In choosing Hokusai as the master to be preferred to all others in forming a collection for a public museum, Francis Lathrop showed admirable judgment. This artist, although essentially Japanese, is in many ways very close to some of our Western ideals. Through Hokusai's work we may easily enter into the spirit of Japanese art until we learn finally to appreciate their great classical masters. And even after entering the holy of holies, we still feel a reverence for the genius who led us, step by step, into the temple.

The "Life of Hokusai," by Kioden, was first translated into French by a Dr. Michaut and published in the *Echo de Paris* in June, 1892. It is not very complete nor is it always accurate,

but it possesses, in common with Vasari's Lives, precious qualities which the later more trustworthy biographies entirely lack. As I am not aware that it has appeared in English, I shall give a translation of the French text, correcting, however, one or two obvious mistakes.

According to tradition, Hokusai was born in Yedo [1760], the son of a maker of mirrors at the court of Tokugawa. Tokitaro was his name as a child but, later, he changed it, calling himself Tetsujiro. When, however, he began his art studies with Katsugawa Shunsho, Hokusai took for his first name as an artist Katsugawa Shunro. Now his earliest actors and scenes from theatrical life were painted in the style of Tsuzimi Torin and at this time he also made many of the designs on loose sheets known as Kioka Surimono. Sent away from the house of his master for reasons which are still unknown, he succeeded to the workshop and name of Tawaraya Sori. Later, when he changed his style and created a new manner of painting, he gave the name Sori to his pupil Soji, returning to the Tawaraya family the signature received from them. It is only in the tenth year of the Kwansei era (1789–1800) that he began to sign some of his prints "Hokusai, Tokimasa Taito." It is said that he took this name of Hokusai because of his profound veneration for the god Hokushin-Mioken. As for the name Taito he later abandoned it to his son-in-law Shigenobu. The style known as "Hokusai-riu" is quite characteristic of "Ukiyoye," the mirror of the passing world, and Hokusai is the real

founder of a method of painting, which, although founded on Chinese models, has become the expression of modern Japan. And his work at once had the good fortune to win, not only the admiration of his brother artists, but also to interest the common people, for whatever he did was new and strange. During the Kwansei era (1789–1800) Hokusai wrote many stories and novels for women and children, and these he illustrated himself, signing the writings, "Tokitaro (first born) Kako" and the illustrations, "Gwakiojin (mad with drawing) Hokusai." And it was due to the cleverness of his brush that his stories and novels began to be well known. As a poet of the popular tradition he was also skillful. Now, during all this time he was living at Asakusa, where a great many young men from Kioto and Osaka wishing to study painting sought him out and became apprentices in his workshop. And, although there were many painters in the towns of Nagoya and Kioto and Osaka, none were able to surpass him. Then it was that he printed books in which the graver's art was shown and drawings without number were made. Not long after, according to the custom of that part of the country, the master gave his signature of Hokusai to one of his pupils who kept an eating-house in the Yoshiwara. This man painted in his rooms large pictures measuring 16 yen (70 feet) for the occasions when Hokusai opened the meetings of painters who came to adopt new signatures. From this time of his life he began to sign his prints "Sakino Hokusai, Taito" (formerly Hokusai, now Taito). And,

when he changed his name again, he called himself "Tamekazu" or sometimes "Iitsu." As he had no time to give models of painting to all his pupils, he had designs engraved and made into books and these books later have had great success. Hokusai was most skillful in the style of painting called "Kioku-yé" in which, instead of brushes, bottles, cups, bowls, and other eating utensils, dipped in Chinese ink, were used. Nor was he less skillful with his left hand. At times, beginning at the bottom of his painting, he would work up to the top. Other paintings made with his finger nails were wonderful indeed, and no one would ever suppose that they had not been made with brushes unless he had actually seen Hokusai at work. Somewhere he has written: "After having studied for many long years the paintings of diverse schools I have laid bare their hidden secrets. Whatever was of use to me I have made my own. Nothing in the art of painting is now unknown to me. I have tried my brush on everything and in all I have succeeded." And, in fact, Hokusai has painted everything from the "Kambam," the vulgar poster for the strolling actor or hawker of old clothes up to the most noble subjects. Even the strangers from across the sea sought his drawings and prints and they were sent out by hundreds until the government of Takugawa forbade their sale outside the country. During the years of the "Tempo" epoch (1830–1843) Hokusai had printed in great numbers drawings of love scenes called "Shungwa" of beautiful color. These he signed with the false

name "Gumatei." The greatest honor which ever came to Hokusai was when, his fame becoming known at the court of Takugawa, he was asked to show his talent, which indeed had no rival, before the great prince. And this is how it came about. Once, when the Shogun was returning from the hunt, Hokusai was invited by the prince to paint in his presence. On an immense sheet of paper, with a common brush, such as is used to spread glue, he smeared broad washes of indigo. Then he had some chickens brought to him. Dipping their feet in some crimson he drove them hither and thither over the paper. To the amazed prince appeared the river Tatsuta with its rapids on which floated autumn leaves dropped by the maple in the current. Hokusai never had any fixed home, but was always moving, seldom staying more than from one moon to the next in any place. He died at the age of ninety years, the eighteenth day of the fourth month of the second year of "Kayei" (May 10th, 1849). A stone has been placed at his grave by his daughter, Shirai Tati. It is in the garden of the temple "Seikioji of Asakusa" in the "Hachikendera-Machi" at Asakusa. The poem which he spoke at the last hour was this: "Oh, freedom, the wonderful freedom when the spirit can wander at will through the summer meadows, free at last from its mortal body." Hokusai had three daughters, of whom the youngest became a skillful painter. She married Minamisawa, but later was divorced. Of all the many young men who came to study under Hokusai the names which are

spoken of in the books of the painters are sixteen or seventeen.

As to the position which Hokusai will finally take in the history of art, it is still rather difficult to determine. The average modern Japanese is such an admirer of Western ideals that he has no desire to follow in the footsteps of any Oriental master. The exceptions are men who would renounce everything but the purest wells of Japanese tradition and they consider Hokusai as too European. His influence, therefore, for the present is very slight throughout Japan. And, if the Japanese underestimate his marvellous talent, may it not be in a measure that it is the natural reaction against the panegyrics which have been written in France by such men as Edmond de Goncourt? Those Europeans who have considered him to have been the greatest artist who has ever lived, have surely judged his achievement from a very different point of view from any previously held. Attracted by his novelty, like children with a new toy, they have lost all sense of proportion and can no longer appreciate any other work. The relative indifference of the modern Japanese is not difficult to understand. For two hundred years Japanese art had been fettered by the traditions of their great past, so fettered that

we can hardly hope to comprehend it. From their past, rules had been evolved, which were absolute canons of taste. Little inspiration had been found outside the work of the acknowledged masters. Hoitsu's relation to Korin may be taken as a typical example. Coming over a century later, Hoitsu brings absolutely nothing personal to his work. It is Korin watered, almost more water than Korin. Tradition covers the whole province of art,—subject-matter, treatment, composition, and even the colored silks to be used for the mounts. That the maxims should be so all-pervading implies a very high state of civilization, but tradition can never give the needed impulse to a popular movement in art. Therefore Hokusai broke with them and consequently alienated all the more conservative elements of Japanese culture. The radicals, shortly after Hokusai's death, became convinced of the superiority of European ideals, not only in practical affairs but also in music, sculpture, architecture and painting. To these radicals Hokusai is still hopelessly Japanese.

The extraordinary vitality of his vision is perhaps the most wonderful quality of Hokusai's achievement. Probably no other artist has ever produced such a mass of vital work. He has brought before us the active life which his fellow countrymen were leading. Whatever they do is done with all their might. A group of laborers resting by the way-side rest as strenuously as they worked an hour or two before. To find an art which can be ranked with this at all we must go to France where in the work of Forain and Stein-

len we do discover something not wholly unlike. But Hokusai's production of work of the highest quality is scattered over sixty years of intense activity, whereas Forain and Steinlen were only able to do their greatest work for a period of several months. But added to this marvellous fertility, which is so characteristic of the Japanese master, he has other gifts, perhaps more rare in a man of his vital force, a fine sense of composition and decoration. This combination of talents gives Hokusai a unique position in art. It is folly to lament that he did not have the dignity of the great Japanese masters of the eighth and ninth centuries. The manners of the nineteenth century were lacking in dignity, the influence of court life was declining on all sides and Hokusai, sprung from the people, could but express the change. Life must have an ever-varying charm and each master will continue to render the beauty of his epoch in his own peculiar way. When, at last, the history of the graphic art of the last century is written, Hokusai, the last of the great Japanese masters, will surely figure as one of its most important artists.

CATALOGUE

PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

NOTE

It has not seemed fitting to alter the titles and descriptions assigned by Prof. Fenellosa and Francis Lathrop to the paintings, nor have I changed any date except in cases where the mistake is fairly obvious. In order to show the evolution of the style of Hokusai, I have endeavored to arrange the paintings and drawings approximately in chronological order. It has been rather difficult for the successive manners overlap, and a print by Hokusai usually shows more advancement in technical knowledge than a painting of the same period, just as a Beethoven sonata is more advanced than a symphony written the same year. It seems hardly necessary to call attention to the slowness of Hokusai's development as shown in his painting. His best work is done relatively late in life and there is no sign of waning power up to the last.

1. Hotei with His Bag of Treasures.
   An early but characteristic Hokusai.
   Signed: Hishikawa Sori.
2. A Court Lady.
   Very beautiful in line and color. About 1798.
   Signed: Sori.
3. A Pilgrim.
   Showing Torin influence. About 1798.
   Signed: Sori.
4. The God Hotei with a Marionette.
   This, in the opinion of Fenellosa, dates from 1795. He could hardly have noticed the head-dress of the marionette, which fixes the date as not earlier than 1798. Same paper as preceding.
   Signed: Towairaya Sori.

5. The Struggle with the Dragon.
   The Torin influence is again strongly marked. Such subjects are always difficult to date.
   Signed: Sori.
6. Mythological Subject, Lady on Fish.
   Fenellosa considered this the finest piece of the period he had ever seen. The head-dress shows it cannot be more than a year later than number four.
   Signed: Gwakiojin Hokusai.
7. Old Woman with a Basket, about 1802.
   Same paper as preceding.
   Signed: Gwakiojin Hokusai.
8. Woman Bearing Fagots Leading Ox.
   Signed: Gwakiojin Hokusai.
9. Figure of a Woman Richly Attired.
   A very beautiful piece of painting.
   Signed: Katsushika Hokusai.
10. A Monk Burning an Image of Buddha, about 1805.
    Signed: Katsushika Hokusai.
11. Monk Before a Fire.
    Fenellosa gives the year 1805 for the probable date of this drawing.
    Unsigned.
12. Drawing with Washes of Color.
    About 1805.
    Unsigned.
13. Landscape with Water and a Boat.
    Signed: Katsushika Hokusai.
14. Figure of a Lady Richly Attired Seated by a Rock with Fan at Her Feet.
    Signed: Taito.
15. Old Man Walking.
    About 1820.
    Signed: Taito.
16. Sketch in Black over Red Lines. A Warrior.
    Unsigned.
17. Old Man with Rake.
    Unsigned.
18. Old Woman with Broom.
    Unsigned.

19. Landscape. A Grotto with Sea and Boats.
Unsigned.

20. Landscape. Drawing in Ink with Pale Tints.
Unsigned.

21. Hotei (more probably Daikoku) Riding Rat with Boy Behind.
Fenellosa says of this drawing: "It is a very fine one, compares with the best in the Boston Museum."

22. Devil Under a Shield.
Unsigned.

23. Bird of Prey on a Pile at the Edge of a Pond.
An unusual and strong piece of painting.
Unsigned.

24. A Hermit-Saint.
About 1830.
Signed: Hokusai.

25. Frog Watching a Snail.
Signed: Hokusai.

26. Two Storks Flying.
Signed: Hokusai Aratame Taito.

27. Bird Flying in a Storm.
Signed: Hokusai.

28. Symbols of the Buddhist Faith.
Signed: Hokusai.

29. Bird on Perch.
Unsigned but with late seal.

30. Old Woman in the Country.
This and the succeeding paintings were made during the last years of Hokusai's life when he had completely shaken off the trammels of convention.
Signed: Manji.

31. Symbols of Health and Happiness.
A masterly arrangement of black and white.
Signed: Manji, aged eighty (1839).

32. Birds Flying Near a Large Leafed Plant.
Signed: Gwakiojin Manji, aged 80.

33. A Peddler.
Signed: Gwakiojin Manji, aged 80.

34. Two Fans with Flower Decorations.
Unsigned.

35. Fan Mackerel with Flowers.
Signed: Gwakiojin Manji, aged 83.
36. Demon Carrying a Sack.
Signed: Manji, aged 85.
37. Daikoku Using Buddhist Emblems in Comic Cookery.
Signed: Formerly Hokusai Manji, aged 86.
38. A Fan with Vines and Flowers.
Signed: Gwakiojin Manji, aged 86.

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